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Session 2B Culture: A driver and an enabler of social cohesion _Culture's contribution to addressing urban violence

Architecture, Urbanism and Landscape Design as catalyst to urban violence; Medellin, Colombian case study

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If achieving sustainability is first and foremost about making an appropriate use of the planet's resources, then culture must be at the centre of our development strategies, since cultures frame people's relationship to others in their society and the world around them, including the natural environment, and condition their behaviours.

After Rio+20, the international community is concentrating on the review of the MDGs and on defining the post-2015 development agenda. As the need to ensure that the next model and strategies for sustainable development include consideration of CULTURE. UNESCO, working in partnership with Governments, UN Agencies, the private sector and the civil society, is promoting a new agenda for development that integrates consideration for culture.

It is clear that we are living through a moment of profound change in the way we value the material, social and cultural context of our lives. There is an extraordinary but fragile renaissance taking place as society, governments and investors begin to appreciate the true value and complexity of the landscape within culture context.

"Seeing the landscape as an environmental, economic and social resource is a more dynamic and democratic concept. It is not an elitist, scientific, or intellectual concern and it's certainly not here purely for those who can afford it. It links governance, finance, health and education. Concerned with remarkable and degraded landscapes, the special and the everyday, all territories from rural to urban, all areas, from the most treasured to the most nondescript and unloved as well as the places and spaces in desperate need of regeneration, it is not simply about landscape as bio diversity or ecology".

This new focus on the landscape is reflected in the number and range of legislative initiatives being put in place across the world, including the European Landscape Convention (2000), signed now by 37 countries, the Latin American Landscape Initiative, with 12 countries ratifying and celebrating national landscape charters in Medellin, Colombia in October 2012. Landscape charters are anticipated from Indonesia, New Zealand, Canada, Nigeria and other nations in Africa over the next couple of years and many others are in the pipeline.

IFLA the International Federation of Landscape Architects support the idea of a "Global Landscape Initiative aimed to promote in all regions of the world appropriate landscape safeguarding legislation and regulations, to strengthen international collaboration, exchanges and capacity building efforts, and to promote the adoption of an international landscape convention. This new normative tool should be aimed at focusing public policies on the relationship between people and their landscape, at bringing together art and science,

nature and CULTURE, heritage and development in order to protect and improve the sustainability and value of the everyday landscape across the world”.

Landscape is important because it links culture with nature, and the past with the present. It has many values, not all of them tangible (such as sense of place); and it matters to people – it is people who create and value landscape.

Integrating CULTURE in the World agenda will a great achievement; and it is great for landscape too, since it has become clear, that LANDSCAPE is the territorial dimension of culture!

With regard to peace, conflict prevention and reconciliation, culture-landscape-sensitive development that acknowledges diversity and promotes the ability of individuals to participate freely in cultural life and access cultural assets can contribute considerably to the building of a culture of “living together,” helping to prevent tensions and confrontation. In this case Landscape is more than greenery that heals decades of violence and fear - it is a strategically designed tool that opens civic society both physically and metaphorically

As a ratification of the power of the Landscape I highlight how Medellin project have proven their effectiveness in addressing violence, linking equity through the sustainable and urban landscape design. The intention of my presentation is to document the case study in the following areas: social urbanism, citizen’s security, social inclusion, public space development, art culture, landscape approach and safer environs.

Medellin Going from pain and fear to hope, and now from hope to a place filled with life.

Few of the world’s urban areas have suffered crises as profound as those that Medellin, Colombia, South American city has had to face. Yet there are also few cities that enjoy such a privileged natural heritage and landscape, the delight of natives and visitors alike in times of peace. Known as ‘the city of eternal spring’ for its splendid climate with an average temperature of 24°C, it throbs in the heart of the Andean Cordillera Central, in the coffee producing areas of north-west Colombia, standing 1,480m above sea level.

Medellin displays an example of how an integrated planning method that unites political will, governance, civil society, architecture and landscape design together to transform the once ‘most world violence city’ into a transforming inclusive society has given the fundamental human right of the poor back – Dignity! The tool Medellin employed has been popularized as ‘Social urbanism’.

Architecture, Urbanism and Landscape Design as catalyst to urban violence

Conceived in the Colombian city of Medellín, social urbanism is changing the very fabric of Colombia and offers the promise of hope to some of the world’s most troubled cities.

The idea of social urbanism revolves around putting pride back into a city, investing the greatest amount of resources, of high quality and aesthetic excellence, in the poorest, most violent parts of the city. Through urbanism, architecture and landscape design, cities have the ability to transform on a societal level, with Medellín standing as a true testament to this notion.

By adopting an inclusive and innovative approach to urban renewal, Medellin has achieved what many cities have struggled to do: **create a strong culture of transformation.**

Transforming the urban fabric of any city is an overwhelming task. The alignment of public support, political will, financial resources, professional innovation, and human capacity is a rare event. However, the cities of Bogotá, Medellin have achieved a remarkable renaissance through its green infrascapes, transports, social, education and public space as drivers of landscape change, reinforcing local identity with community

development, culture investment projects which prove the effectiveness in addressing urban violence, in just a few years.

Medellin proves that violence prevention can work. Above all, the city' experience show that there are reasons for optimism in the fight against violence and crime even in the most difficult settings.

Medellin's urban development began with the management of mayors Sergio Fajardo (2003-2007) and Alonso Salazar (2007-2011). The administration of Mayor Sergio Fajardo was vital to the city development with his model 'Medellin, the most educated'. His aim was to recover the marginalized areas of the city through "Social Urbanism". He pursued to enhance critical awareness of the injustices of traditional urban development and municipal management. Fajardo implemented projects that reflected his interest in improving the education system through new schools and libraries parks with high architectural value, in order to show that violence can be fought by means of cultural development and social inclusion.

In the words of Fajardo, the idea was "the most beautiful things for the most humble people, so that the pride felt in that which is public illuminates us all. The beauty of the architecture is essential. Where before there was death, fear and dislocation, today there are the most impressive buildings, all of the highest quality - cultural and educational focal points around which we can all come together in peaceful coexistence. In this way we are sending out a political message about the dignity of the space which is open, without exception, to all citizens, which means recognizing the value of everyone, reaffirming our self-esteem and creating a feeling of belonging. Our buildings, parks and pedestrian precincts are beautiful and modern. Just as they are in any other city in the world".

Social urbanism as a strategy has been designed as a comprehensive strategy that seeks solutions to mobility, governance and education together with the recovery of public space and green areas. The aim of this strategy is to recover the poorest sectors of the city that until recently, were dominated by communist groups, paramilitaries or drug smugglers.

His idea of social urbanism revolves around putting pride back into a city through architecture and design. Journalist and social commentator Ángela Sánchez described social urbanism in her report 'Social Urbanism: the Metamorphosis of Medellín' as "investing the greatest amount of resources, of the highest quality and aesthetic excellence, in the poorest, most violent parts of the city.

Culture, Education, social urbanism and inclusion

The City Council placed education, in the broadest sense of the term, at the heart of their policies, making it the driving force for social transformation in order to tackle three main problems: social inequality, historically accumulated debt and violence.

The 'Medellín, the most educated' model promoted integrated programmes based around the concept of social urbanism as an instrument for social inclusion. The principle was a simple, yet revolutionary one for Colombia: investing the majority of resources, of the highest quality and aesthetic excellence, in the poorest, most violent areas. Until then, things had been done in a diametrically opposed way in Colombia.

"We decided to transform the appearance of the city. We implemented a policy of transforming and intervening through large-scale investment in the public sphere, putting up new, high-impact, symbolic landmark buildings in the most deprived areas", states Alejandro Echeverri.

What sets the Medellin example apart from other projects in informal areas is the shift in focus from housing solutions to essential neighbourhood infrastructure: transportation, education and public space. The project involved a series of physical interventions such as the "Metrocable" tramway that connects the residents to the formal city, and an extensive system of escalators which help residents traverse the steep topography. A new library that overlooks the city not only becomes a new symbol for Medellin, but its plaza provides a leisure space that reinvents the alien nature of this new program inside the neighbourhood.

"Medellín stands today as an example for many cities around the world, because despite having lived very dark and difficult times 20 years ago we have been undergoing a true metamorphosis. Going from pain and fear to hope, and now from hope to be a place filled with life, the city has known how to innovate in every step, both in social programs, urban developments or the combination of both and this has been key in the success of this process" said Mayor Aníbal Gaviria.

Why are they making progress at a time when other Latin American cities seem to be caught in a rising spiral of violence?

First, the changes are the product of a political commitment that has been sustained over the course of a decade spanning three/four municipal administrations.

Second, Medellin leaders have always conceived of security as only one component of a broad social strategy designed to improve social cohesion, inclusion and quality of life for all. Instead, they were designed to complement measures to improve public transportation and road safety, provide safe recreational areas, upgrade infrastructure in low-income neighborhoods, offer public services, and increase citizens' responsibilities toward their city.

Third, Medellin gave priority to improving the performance and professionalism of the police.

The IDB Program of Inclusion, Violence Prevention and Youth Employment in Medellin:

Strengthening of personal competencies (self-esteem, life respect) and social competencies (respect for others and for the city). Reduce risk in youngsters when doing violent activities, Enhance labor abilities, Reduce school drop-off's, and improve the youngster's life project basis

According to Carlos Villasenor (President of Cultural Interactivity & Development), turning to the cultural sector helped the Colombian city of Medellin, which was plagued by endemic violence in the 1990s, diminish violence by 80% in a dramatic turnaround. In 2011, 30% of the city's budget was invested in education, culture, and urban landscaping. New cultural infrastructures, such as public libraries and concert halls, gave access to culture to all. **A new urban landscaping succeeded in bringing residents together, through the creation of open and green spaces.**

"The diversity, durability and dynamism of these initiatives prove the viability of culture in development models. Their value must be recognized and supported by public policy at the highest level. Let's put culture on the world development agenda now!" stated the Director-General.

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